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## Sports and International Relations: The Role of Soccer in International Conflicts and Resolutions

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**Sports and International Relations:**  
**The Role of Soccer in International Conflicts and Resolutions**

**By: Julianna Deyo**

**Honors Thesis Project**

**May 2013**

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## Introduction

When I first started to think seriously about what I wanted to write my senior honors thesis on last fall, I decided to think critically about my interests and my interests specifically within the realm of political science. Unfortunately, nothing was immediately jumping out at me. I enjoyed my political science classes but was not able to think of a topic in which I could delve further in to. I decided to shelve my musings for a later day and went to ESPN to set my fantasy football lineup for Sunday's upcoming games. Unbeknownst to me at the time, this action would ultimately provide me with my topic because unequivocally, the majority of the activities that I participate in are out of the nature of competition and herein laid my greatest interest: sports.

Throughout my life, sports have played (no pun intended) an integral role in my development. It seems as if I have always been surrounded by sports. My parents both played collegiately and even as a child, it was a common joke in my family that I was kicking a soccer ball before I could even walk. My bedroom was littered with posters of my idol, Mia Hamm. My two younger brothers play soccer as well and two of my cousins played football and basketball at Michigan State. Furthermore, my average school week usually consists of several intramural games and I put as much effort in to winning championship t-shirts as I do towards making A's in my classes. Generally speaking, it is safe to say that I grew up in and around sports. It was only natural then for me to gravitate towards this area when exploring what I would potentially want to write about.

Equipped with this knowledge (pun intended), I began to focus on sports and politics and eventually I honed in on the field of international relations. Through various history and political science classes, I was aware of a relationship but it had never been

covered in any sort of depth or detail. Through some preliminary research, however, I was surprised to discover how integrated this relationship actually was. In my research, one sport was constantly coming up in searches and it just happened to be my native sport and the world's game—soccer. In my thesis, I will be examining the role of soccer in international conflicts and conflict resolutions by comparing several cases and what they reveal about the nature of the game and the international community, whether this relationship is positive or negative. Interestingly, this endeavor is actually taking me full circle in my academic career at the University of Tennessee. During my first semester, I took a University Honors seminar class on Soccer and World Culture and I look forward to probing further in to this area that I was first introduced to as a freshman.

### **Background and History**

“Some people believe football is a matter of life and death: I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that” (Goldblatt ix). As Bill Shankly, the legendary former manager of Liverpool, asserted, the significance of the world's game can never be underestimated. Soccer can affect lives on a national and international scale, inspiring revolutions and causing wars as well as having the capability to create peace and lift entire nations. One thing is certain, however, and that is when sports and politics collide, there is bound to be a profound influence and lasting effect. Of importance is how football, or soccer to Americans, rose to prominence on the international scale and created the stage for these remarkable collisions.

According to FIFA President Sepp Blatter, “football is as old as the world” (Goldblatt 3). While this might be a slight exaggeration, it makes reference to the storied history of the game. Primitive forms of the game were first played in China as early as 200 B.C. (Goldblatt 5). Like many other Chinese innovations, the ball game spread along the tracks of imperial expansion and the networks of long-distance trade routes to other areas of Southeast Asia, Western Europe, and even Central America. However, the modern version of the game that is seen today came about in Great Britain in the early nineteenth century. While the United States was learning how to be an independent country, Great Britain was modernizing and popularizing what would come to be an international phenomenon.

One of the defining characteristics of football was born in its early stages of creation in Great Britain. The universalism of the sport was on display as elite nobles played on pristine pitches down to dockworkers playing in the yard. Whereas cricket and rowing were typically reserved for aristocrats and boxing enjoyed by the working class, football became a uniting sport that was only differentiated by the level of talent, not class. Interestingly, football was nurtured and expanded by the British public school system as a means of instilling discipline and shaping character to reform young schoolboys. It also went along with the emerging Victorian ideal of muscular Christianity, which concerned the relationship between physical, mental, and moral health (Goldblatt 27).

After the Crimean War, football became very popular within the army (Goldblatt 29). The only problem was what kind of football to play because each boy had his own set of school-specific rules. For this reason, they set out to establish the first set of

compromise rules. There was a division between those who wanted a handling-based game and those who preferred kicking and dribbling. Ultimately, with the formation of the Rugby Football Union in 1871, association football became a distinct entity at last (Goldblatt 32). The only remaining questions were whether it would be popular and whether it would survive. The Irish, the Americans, and the Australians, all of whom were exposed to the new game of association football in the second half of the nineteenth century, would proclaim their fundamental opposition, separation, and distance from the British monopoly by playing their own distinct football codes (Goldblatt 42).

How was it then that football was able to catch on? Football was cheaper and easier to organize, learn, and play than hockey or rugby. Moreover, football is played with less danger to the participants. For working class men who could not afford to miss a day's pay, this was a considerable factor in choosing the kicking game over the handling game (Goldblatt 42). Almost from the moment of its codification, football was championed by the British working classes as both players and spectators. The working-class colonization of football at the end of the nineteenth century coincided with Britain's industrialization and urbanization. Wages began to rise and the spare cash for a football match was much more widely available; furthermore, there was time to spend it as hourly labor laws came in to affect, which also provided for more recreation time (Goldblatt 52-3). While cricket remained immensely popular in England, it had ceded its place as the national game to football by the First World War (Goldblatt 51).

Football was certainly an accurate barometer of Britain's relationship with the rest of the world. The immensity of Britain's empire and influence helped spread the game all over the world, despite the early reluctance. While it is said that the sun never set on the

British Empire during this time period, the same held true about the game of football. In the decade before the First World War, British clubs were touring extensively in Europe and South America (Goldblatt 76). The superiority and sophistication of English football was apparent to all and the British national team won gold at both the 1908 and 1912 Olympics. In fact, Britain considered itself so advanced and superior that when the first international football organization—The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA)—was created in 1904, it was founded in Paris without any British involvement (Goldblatt 77).

By the time the first FIFA World Cup was held in Uruguay in 1930, the number of national associations had reached 41 and would grow to 51 by the start of World War II (Hooper). In the 1930's, the modern rules as we know today became association laws. Around the world, passion for the game was gaining ground on the local level as more clubs in cities and towns brought traditions to followers who passed the passion down through the years. After World War II, the growth of football worldwide mirrored a return to normalcy and prosperity. The first postwar World Cup took place in Brazil in 1950 ("History"). Alongside the World Cup, regional competitions such as the European Championships and the Copa América in South America gave national team followers more chances to cheer for their countries' best players. With fan bases solidly established for club and national teams, the spread of radio and television meant that followers could keep up with their teams at anytime, anywhere. Football had cemented its place as "the world's game."

## Case Studies

The growth of football occurred initially because it was so easy to export: a ball and some players were all that was needed. If a ball were lacking, rags tied into the right shape would do, while goalposts could be any two objects marking the correct distance—nets were never a must and even a goalkeeper could be done without. To play football, you did not need to be rich, well educated, or even a man (although that would come later). Even in a class-based society like Britain, football has widespread and seemingly unlikely fandom; university professors follow the fate of the home club with the same passion and zeal as the local postman or cabbie.

Thus, football mirrors the current global political situation, although it often seems to reverse taken-for-granted global hierarchies. Brazil, not a rich nation nor highly industrialized, remains the footballing nation for excellence, while the global might of the USA and China is not matched by its success on the football pitch, not counting the women. Symbolically, football success or failure can stand in for the battles that cannot be fought between nations. Yet, if football has become a mirror of the global, it can also hide as much truth as it reveals. It can portray the nation as unified while covering up internal fractures that might be played out between local clubs such as the rivalry between the largely Catholic supporters of Celtic FC and the Protestant supporters of Rangers FC or the ethnic tension felt between the largely Basque-identified Atletico Bilbao and Castilian Real Madrid. Occasionally giving the lie to the idea that football matches are a replacement for violence, battles between supporters reveal racist and historically felt prejudices. Although legend has it that temporary peace broke out in No Man's Land on Christmas Eve, football also led to war when Honduras and El Salvador



fought in 1969 (Goldblatt 172). It is precisely these sorts of contradictions, allegiances, and symbolic convergences that make the study of football worthy of the academic gaze. These cases, among others, will be thoroughly examined.

### *Christmas Truce*

At first glance the First World War does not appear to be a promising environment for football. With the conclusion of the FA Cup in 1913, football ceased for the duration of the war. A hierarchy of priority was given when the War Office commandeered the FA's office space at 42 Russell Square. In Germany, football pitches were converted to vegetable patches in an effort to mitigate the impact of the naval blockade and general food shortages. During the first Christmas of the war, however, warfare took the backseat to an unlikely match (Goldblatt 172-3).

As notes from "Silent Night" floated across the Western Front, German soldiers lit candles on Christmas trees that had been delivered in place of munitions. Despite orders to continue shooting, troops on opposing sides of the front lines called for a spontaneous ceasefire and unofficial truce. Then, in the spirit of goodwill, the men decided to play a football match. The Christmas truce of 1914 was a unique moment in history. During the ceasefire, German, French, British, and Belgian soldiers met in the middle of No Man's Land in Flanders, Belgium. An estimated 100,000 men took part. They shook hands, buried the remaining dead, and even exchanged rations and gifts, including chocolate cake, liquor, and cigarettes (Weintraub 4-7).

In this atmosphere of goodwill, soldiers decided to throw down their caps and helmets and use them as goalposts. As one soldier recounts, "No Man's Land had seemed ten miles across when we were crawling out on a night patrol; but now we found

it no wider than two football pitches” (qtd. in Weintraub 8). Lieutenant Gustav Riebensahm of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Westphalians wrote in his diary, “The English are said to have told the 53<sup>rd</sup> Regiment they are exceedingly thankful for the truce because they simply had to play football again” (qtd. in Weintraub 14). The Germans beat the British 3-2 and the 133<sup>rd</sup> Saxon Regiment recorded this game in its official history. “Everywhere you looked, the occupants of the trenches stood about talking to each other and playing football,” said Hugo Klemm of the 133<sup>rd</sup> Saxon Regiment. “It was hard to believe we were at war with one another” (qtd. in Weintraub 12). Some soldiers wanted to extend the truce beyond the Christmas holiday, but officers on both sides were anxious for their missions to continue (Weintraub 8-14).

With calls for renewed combat, the truce was mostly over before New Year’s Day. The war would last another three Christmases, but there would never be another such truce (Weintraub 42). Christmas 1914 was the last collective pause in the killings—the last moment, it appeared at the time, that the machinery of war might be disengaged. One of the reasons football was played was because the soldiers were not able to communicate very well because of the language barrier. Instead, they communicated through the universal language of sport. A symbolic moment of peace and humanity amidst one of the most violent events of modern history, a ball represented the proverbial olive branch. Thus, the enduring memory of football imagery from the war is of the game as a peacemaker.

### *“Soccer War”*

For over thirty years, El Salvador and Honduras had been locked into a complex economic and environmental conflict along their border. El Salvador was the most

densely populated country in the region with a grotesquely unequal distribution of land. Consequently, there were enormous numbers of landless and destitute Salvadorian peasants. Honduras was a much larger and less populated country—approximately five times as large with half the population. By 1969, around 300,000 Salvadorans had crossed the border in search of land and work. The two countries met in a three-match series that would decide who went to the 1970 World Cup (Goldblatt 533).

At the first match in Tegucigalpa in Honduras, the crowd and authorities made things uncomfortable for the Salvadorans and their dispirited side lost 1-0. The immediate reaction by the fans included rioting and fighting in the stands. According to one report, “the stadium was set afire.” After the match, many reports surfaced about a woman who killed herself at the conclusion of the game. The Salvadoran media spun this to their advantage, reporting on it in detail and even showing the funeral on television (Cable 662). They used the suicide to create hostile feelings not only towards the Honduran soccer team, but also towards the entire nation.

Before the return match in San Salvador, however, it was the Hondurans who would face intimidation from the fans. The night before the game, General José Alberto Medrano led Salvadoran fans in an attempt to disturb the Honduran’s sleep and affect their game the next day. The screaming crowd broke all of the windows in the hotel and threw rotten eggs, dead rats, and smoking rags inside. At the end of the night, two men lay dead in the street and seven people were injured by the police. The players had to be taken to the match in armored cars and the army surrounded the stadium grounds. Instead of the Honduran flag, which had been burnt in front of the spectators, the hosts ran a

dirty, tattered dishrag up the flagpole. El Salvador won this match 3-0 (Richter et al. 118).

In retaliation, attacks against Salvadorans broke out in Honduras, leading to a massive exodus back across the border. Local gangs in Honduras terrorized Salvadoran settlers, trying to force them to flee. If they did not leave, their houses were burned to the ground. In an atmosphere of press and political hysteria, diplomatic relations were severed. El Salvador dissolved all ties with Honduras, stating that “the government of Honduras has not taken any effective measures to punish these crimes which constitute genocide, nor has it given assurances of indemnification or reparations for the damages caused to Salvadorans” (Anderson 62). Two weeks later, El Salvador invaded Honduras. Even though the war only lasted a few days, some 6,000 people were killed or injured during the conflict (Goldblatt 533-4).

Although this conflict arose out of border and immigration disputes, football was the spark that facilitated the violence. Serving as a catalyst, this war was a bloody reminder that the implications of a sporting event can reach far beyond the field. Soccer, a metaphor for war, had turned into a real war. The aggressive nature of the game of football can often lead to hostility among fans, and this war was an extreme example of nationalistic football fervor turning violent.

#### *Nobel Peace Nomination*

“Football has and will continue to play an important role in the global arena, when it comes to creating understanding between people” (“Game”). This was the reasoning of Swedish lawmaker, Lars Gustafsson, when nominating football for a Nobel Peace Prize in 2001. He wrote that hostile nations sometimes meet on the football field

when other contact would be unthinkable. “Taking part in the game of football, either as a player or a spectator, is a way of expressing oneself in a universal language. With its common rules and principles of understanding, football creates a public meeting-place with no hindering boundaries. The game links people together ... from different continents and with varying history and culture” (Cronin).

For example, Gustafsson pointed out how North and South Korea sent a unified Korean team to compete in the 1991 Junior World Championship in Portugal, well ahead of any formal diplomatic negotiations between the two nations. Along those same lines, Gustafsson referred to the discussions between North and South Korea and Iran and Iraq to establish an Asia-qualification round for the 2004 World Championship (Cronin). At the same time that politicians could not get in the same room with each other, sports officials were negotiating in a spirit of friendliness.

Perhaps nowhere was this dichotomy between political interaction and athletic interaction more apparent than in the 1998 World Cup, when the United States faced off against Iran in the group stage (Cronin). Since Iran’s Islamic Revolution that ousted the pro-American Shah in 1979, relations between the two nations had been hostile. When the draw for the 1998 World Cup pooled the United States and Iran together in Group F, the president of the U.S. Soccer Federation called it “the mother of all games” (Longman). Six months later, the match did not disappoint—not necessarily because of its football prowess, for neither team was expected to go very far, but rather for its political significance.

One of the first complications was that Iran was team B and the United States was team A. According to FIFA regulations, team B is supposed to walk towards team A

for the pre-match handshakes, but Iran's Supreme Leader Khamenei gave express orders that the Iranian team must not walk towards the Americans (Longman). Symbolically, he believed that this image conjured up the notion that Iran was giving in to the United States. Eventually, a compromise was negotiated which saw the Americans walk towards the Iranians, but that was the least of FIFA's worries (Longman).

Off the pitch, a terrorist organization had bought 7,000 tickets for the match and planned on staging a protest during the game. Mujahedin Khalq was an Iraq-based group funded by Saddam Hussein whose primary goal was to destabilize the Iranian regime. Containment of such a large group would be very difficult. The TV cameramen were issued photos so they knew which people and banners to avoid. The match was being shown around the world so the messages portrayed were crucial. When the group's initial plan to display banners was foiled, they turned to a pitch invasion. To head off this attack, the French riot police were called to the stadium at Stade Gerland in Lyon (Longman).

However, if watching the match on television, one would not have noticed any of this commotion. The president of the Iranian Federation wanted to show his country in the best possible light. He asked the kit man to buy white roses, a symbol of peace in Iran, for every player to take out onto the pitch. They swapped these flowers for souvenir pins from the Americans. The two sides also had a joint team photo taken and then the whistle blew for the start of the most politically charged match in the history of the World Cup (Longman). In what was a competitive but fair contest, Iran took the lead five minutes before the half with a goal from Hamid Estili. Mehdi Mahdavia doubled the lead after 80 minutes and despite a late goal from Brian McBride, the Iranians held on to

record their first ever victory in the World Cup finals—but it might as well have been winning the World Cup itself (Weiner). Khodadad Azizi, the top Iranian forward, called the match “the most important of my life” (Longman).

People were dancing in the streets of Tehran, openly drinking alcohol, and the women took off their head scarves. The Revolutionary Guard did not do anything about it because they were also incredibly happy. They were football fans first and Revolutionary Guards second (Longman). Upon the team’s return, President Khatami met them at the airport and issued a sermon calling on the nation to emulate the unity and discipline of its football team (Goldblatt 863).

Not only did Iran secure their first win, but also the defeat for the United States eliminated them from the World Cup. Despite this, the players recognized the part they played in a historic match. “We did more in 90 minutes than the politicians did in 20 years,” said U.S. defender Jeff Agoos (Longman). Eighteen months later the two teams played each other again in a friendly in Pasadena, California. In many respects this match was far more significant because it was just a friendly and required cooperation of both sides. But it could only have happened if the match in France in 1998 was a success. It was certainly that. This is one of many reasons why football received a Nobel Peace nomination.

### *Racism in Soccer*

Love of us and hatred of them—before clubs became global brands and club crests competed with corporate logos, football was entwined with every conceivable social identity and the social divisions that follow them. Belfast and Dundee pitches Catholic against Protestant; in Calcutta it aligns Hindu Mohun Bagan against Muslim

Mohammedan Sporting. In Athens, AEK are the migrant refugees from the Graeco-Turkish war contesting the turf, eighty years later, with the locals of Olympiakos. In Manchester, Turin, and Munich, wealthy outsiders and parvenus play off against the authentic heart and soul of the city. In Rio, rich and poor, elite and mass, white and black take to the field alongside Fluminense and Flamengo (Goldblatt xi-xii). Through the multiple acts of playing, organizing, watching, and following, people have defined and expressed who they think they are and who they think their neighbors are.

In thinking about racism, visions of segregation and Jim Crow Laws often come to mind. However, racism in soccer is not solely limited to matters of color, but rather most often of culture. For football fans, discrimination and mistreatment are brought down upon their own naturalized citizens. The concept of identity is heavily rooted in football so immigrants are seen as outsiders or aliens; they are not deserving of representing their adopted country's colors. Nowhere is this belief more prevalent than in European football.

### **French Football Federation Scandal**

In 2011, the French blog Mediapart published a stunning report based on several weeks of investigation that argued that racist ideas had become normalized at the highest levels of the French Football Federation (F.F.F.). Mediapart reported that in November 2010, several high-ranking members of the F.F.F.—including the current French national team coach, Laurent Blanc, a veteran of the 1998 World Cup campaign—agreed that it was desirable to decrease the numbers of “black and Arab” players in the national training academies (Arfi, Hadjenberg, and Mathieu, “Ethnic Quota Plan”). The plan involved limiting the number of youths from black and North African Meghrebi origin



entering the selection process in training centers and academies (Arfi, Hadjenberg, and Mathieu, “Exclusive”). The goal was to ensure that there was what they considered to be the appropriate number of “white and Christian” players, who were deemed by some to be generally more tactically intelligent (Arfi, Hadjenberg, and Mathieu, “Ethnic Quota Plan”).

They sent out directives to various academies asking them to intervene in 12- and 13-year old trainees in order to effectively limit the number of players of these backgrounds. Among the centers made aware of the quota plan were the French National Football Institute, the INF (Institut National du Football), and the Clairefontaine National Training Center. Clairefontaine is a renowned F.F.F. training academy that has produced many of France’s top football stars, including Thierry Henry, Nicolas Anelka, Louis Saha, and William Gallas (Arfi, Hadjenberg, and Mathieu, “Exclusive”). French Under-21 team coach, Erick Mombaerts, said, “Two leading French football clubs, Olympique de Marseille and Olympique Lyonnais, have already unofficially begun operating a quota system at their training academies, and their example is currently being followed by other clubs” (Arfi, Hadjenberg, and Mathieu, “Ethnic Quota Plan”).

At the center of the discussion was the F.F.F.’s Director of Technical Education, Francois Blacquart. When one member of the F.F.F. suggested setting a policy of having no more than 30 percent of the players in a particular set of national academies who were “able to change nationality,” Blacquart said that he wanted to go further. He was recorded at the meeting saying that “the idea is to say—but not officially—in any case we’re not taking as many kids who might change [their nationality] in the future. We could trace, on a non-spoken basis, a sort of quota. But it must not be said. It stays as action only”

(Arfi, Hajdenberg, and Mathieu, “Ethnic Quota Plan”). Not only did Blacquart insist on a quota, but he also necessitated that it be hidden and carried out effectively in secret. Additionally, he had the power to put such policy into place, since he oversaw the academies in question.

Blanc was also implicated on the recording for broadly agreeing with the limiting of nonwhite players. He backed a change of selection criteria to favor “boys ... with our own culture” (Willsher). Furthermore, he cited the Spanish national team as an example: “The Spanish, they told me, ‘We don’t have a problem. Blacks? We don’t have any’” (Willsher). To add to the controversy, Blanc and Blacquart both denied their involvement initially until the recording of the meeting went public, at which point they backtracked and issued a qualified apology (Willsher).

This incident came as no surprise given the actions following the 2010 World Cup when a small crowd of protestors entered the F.F.F. headquarters, demanding that it create a team that was “white and Christian” by “firing” “blacks and Arabs” (Dubois 281). If anything, they were projecting their disappointment in the national team on to the “blacks and Arabs” and using them as scapegoats to explain the absolute failure of the national team in the 2010 World Cup following their brilliant run to the championship game in 2006.

### **European Cup 2012**

In the summer of 2012, Poland and Ukraine hosted the world’s second most important football tournament, the UEFA European Cup. However, in the build up to the tournament, the focus was not on football, but rather on charges of racism, anti-Semitism, and homophobia as well as worries about violence in the host countries. These

trepidations came in the wake of a British documentary entitled *Euro 2012: Stadiums of Hate* that featured football fans from Poland and Ukraine displaying racist and anti-Semitic attitudes that included the vicious beating of Asian and dark-skinned fans (Baxter).

In the BBC Panorama episode, reporter Chris Rogers attended club games in Poland and Ukraine for a month. He encountered fans in Lodz, Poland, making monkey noises at black players and chanting, “Death, death to the Jewish whore.” In Warsaw, Rogers stepped off the train to see “White Legion” spray-painted on a wall with a white-power symbol, the Celtic cross, planted between the two words. In Rzeszow, Poland, a fan held aloft a sign saying, “Death to the Hooked Noses,” another shot at Jewish people. In Krakow, fans wore anti-Semitic shirts and attacked police when they could not get at opposing fans through a barrier that had been erected in the stadium (McLaughlin).

Things seemed just as bad, if not worse, in Ukraine. There were more monkey chants in Kiev, and in Kharkiv, Rogers stunningly found hundreds of men, women and children throwing their hands up in an apparent Nazi salute and chanting, “Sieg heil!” This was a common greeting in Adolf Hitler's Germany, meaning, “Hail, Victory!” One of the documentary's most disturbing scenes also came at Kharkiv when home team fans surrounded several Indian students sitting in the stadium's family section and brutally attacked them. The students were rooting for the same team as their attackers (McLaughlin).

The most important and fascinating player of immigrant background at the European Cup was most likely Mario Balotelli. For the past decades, Italy's national team has had very few black players, and none so prominent as Balotelli. He had earned a

place as one of the team's key strikers, and his presence had been at the center of polemics and debates around racism at the competition. Born in Sicily to Ghanaian parents, he had health problems as a child and ultimately was fostered with a wealthier Italian couple. Although the fostering was initially meant to be short term, Mario ended up staying, leaving behind his Ghanaian name of Barwuah and taking on that of his foster parents, the Balotellis. At 18, he became an Italian citizen (Pisa and Williamson).

The thing that makes Balotelli interesting though, is that he receives racist treatment from his own country. When he suits up for the Italian national team, fans can be heard chanting: "There is no such thing as a black Italian!" (Foot). Before playing against England in the quarterfinals of the UEFA Cup, Balotelli appeared in Italy's leading sports newspaper, *La Gazzetta Dello Sporto*, as King Kong climbing on Big Ben. The day after scoring two goals in their semifinal victory over Germany, Balotelli appeared on the front page of another Italian sports paper under the headline, "We made them black!" The comment was both a pun on bruising the opposition, but also on the color of Balotelli's skin (Dunbar).

Prior to the tournament's start, Balotelli threatened to walk off the field if he was the target of racism during a game. During a match against Croatia, several hundred fans made monkey noises at him and threw bananas onto the pitch to taunt him. Balotelli ultimately did not carry out his threat of leaving the pitch, but the fact that he had emphasized the issue helped pressure UEFA to take action after the match. They fined the Croatian Federation 80,000 Euros for the behavior of their fans. Spanish, Russian, and German football federations were also similarly fined. Out of 16 teams, one-quarter of the participating countries were fined. However, the fines were 20,000 Euros less than

the UEFA disciplinary panel ordered Denmark forward Nicklas Bendtner to pay only a day earlier for revealing a sponsor's name on his underpants (Dunbar).

### *World Cup Economics*

In the summer of 2010, 32 nations fought in South Africa to be named the world's best footballing nation. Over the course of 63 international matches played in 10 top-of-the-line stadiums across the country, one nation rose victorious. However, they are not nearly as important as the nation that hosted them. While the champions won a trophy and another star to sew on their jersey, South Africa opened its arms and embraced the world, putting itself on display for the 3.2 billion people watching worldwide ("Almost"). The World Cup provided South Africa with accelerated direct and indirect economic benefits such as expanding the country's international profile, adding to the country's GDP, upgrading its infrastructure, and increasing the international exposure for its business community, the scale and scope of which would have been inconceivable without the games.

Advisory firm Grant Thornton Strategic Solutions in Johannesburg did a study one year after the completion of the 2010 World Cup. Many of the economic gains came even before the first kick-off. One of the greatest benefits was the upgrading of the country's infrastructure. Besides the building of new stadiums, the government improved national roads and airports, benefitting construction firms and creating employment. It was estimated that over 400,000 new jobs were created in advance of the tournament, including 6,000 new construction jobs and 40,000 police officers (B. Wilson). South Africa also invested in public transportation like the Gautrain, Africa's first high-speed rail link, and rapid bus transport systems. Information and communications technology

(ICT) upgrades included over 128,000 kilometers of new fiber installed across the country. These preparations helped to mute the effects of the recession occurring in other parts of the world (“Study”).

Other sectors prospering from the event included tourism and retail. Grant Thornton estimated that South Africa saw up to 350,000 people arriving specifically for the World Cup between June and July and those tourists spent about R3,64 billion (\$405 million) during their stay (“Study”). Many more people changed their itineraries to coincide with the event. According to Grant Thornton, 92% of visitors confirmed that they would visit South Africa again, while 96% said they would recommend it to friends and relatives (“Study”). According to SA Tourism, total awareness of South Africa as a leisure destination increased by 9% following the event. Intentions to visit the country in the short term increased by 35% and Grant Thornton predicts that there will be an influx of 1.5 million overseas visitors plus 700,000 more from within Africa between now and 2015 (B. Wilson).

June 2010 retail sales were up 7.4% on June 2009. South African restaurant group Famous Brands recorded a 24% increase in sales in June 2010 compared to the same month the previous year (Cherian, Roubini, and Ziemba). A study by TNS Research Surveys estimated that the South African “brand” received R2 billion (\$223 million) of free advertising during the tournament. South African concert promoter, Big Concerts, indicated that the availability of world-class stadiums in the country is the main reason behind the entry of performers such as Coldplay, U2, and Kings of Leon to South Africa (B. Wilson).

Of greater significance than the temporary economic boosts is the World Cup's long-term impact on business in South Africa and on the continent. Former South African President Thabo Mbeki said, "The World Cup sent ripples of confidence from the Cape to Cairo" (B. Wilson). Africa has recently attracted considerable interest from international investors and multinational corporations. For example, Walmart recently purchased a 51% stake in South African retailer Massmart and German printing company Rako Labels recently made an R77 million (\$8.6 million) investment in a new facility in Cape Town. Speaking during an announcement ceremony, the German firm's managing director Uwe Bögl said the interest of German companies to invest in South Africa was assisted by the successful hosting of the World Cup. Another post-World Cup development was South Africa's invitation to join Brazil, Russia, India, and China in the BRIC group of economies (Cherian, Roubini, and Ziemba).

### *Crisis in Catalonia*

For both its sustained tension and historical significance, few football rivalries can compare to Spain's El Clásico between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid. The stories of Alfredo di Stéfano, General Franco, Santiago Bernabeu, and Luis Figo are legendary, stoking a rivalry of regions that encapsulates an entire nation and captivates the world. These actors in a great sporting drama speak to the heart of Spanish culture, politics, and society. Doubling as a history of both Spain and its football, the roots of competition are ingrained over years of conflict.

Regional rivalry is reflected in the historic centralization policies of the Spanish government. Physically at Spain's direct center, Madrid was built on and sustained by this notion of centralization. As a result, regional rivalries were natural at the very

foundation of most Spanish clubs. The two storied clubs first met in a mini-tournament in 1902 that was held to commemorate the crowning of Alfonso XIII. Barcelona beat Madrid FC (Real Madrid's name at the time) in the opening match, 3-1, and fell to the Basque club Vizcaya in the final, 2-1. Upset that Basques and Catalans were contesting a tournament arranged for a new Castilian monarch, tournament organizers hastily put together a "third-place match" for Madrid. The match was widely publicized by the media and if one did not know any better, you would have thought that Madrid won the tournament (Ball 21-3).

Shared hostility remained as the teams continued to play each other over the next few decades. These contests were mostly dominated by the Catalans, to the tune of repeated and poor-spirited complaints from the direction of Castile. Overall, "the strife and struggles between the two clubs from 1905 onwards accurately mirror the main contests of 20<sup>th</sup> century Spanish history ... mainly through clear cultural differences" (Ball 22). If such differences in 1905 were the logs at the base of the fire, the ensuing political upheaval of General Franco's reign ignited them into full blaze.

The "Catalan question" was a major catalyst of the Spanish Civil War. In 1939, the end of the war saw the Nationalist forces of General Francisco Franco take control of the country. After capturing Madrid, Franco set about unifying the newly formed Spanish state. He frequently used repressionist policies of murder, torture, and political pressure to suppress any anti-Nationalist sentiment. Separatist causes in previously autonomous regions were most troublesome, and since Catalonia had fought Franco's centrist policies bitterly, the region became a source of particular ire for him. In response, General Franco's dictatorship harshly repressed Catalan culture. At the same time, football had



become an important means of cultural expression. Therefore, Franco used football as a propaganda tool for the new regime. He sought to disrupt the operations of Barcelona, a symbol of Catalanian pride, while supporting Real Madrid, Barcelona's archrival from the capital city. Franco had no real passion for the game itself, however, only a fixation on refocusing the state's image on Castile through its most historic team (Ball 120).

History presents many examples of Franco's attempts to coerce Barcelona to rejoin the newly reunited country. Franco's soldiers killed Barca's club president in 1936, and in enforcing the strict prohibition of regional languages, Franco demanded that FC Barcelona be translated to its Spanish equivalent, Barcelona CF. Symbolically, such a change was a cultural indication that Catalan society was not tolerated in the new Spanish state. In the semifinals of the Generalísimo's Cup, formerly the King's Cup, Barcelona was seemingly in control after the first leg, which they comfortably won 3-0 at home. However, upon visiting the capital they were surprised by a visit from the Director of State Security, who reminded them of the state's generosity at letting them remain in the country. The players took the hint and lost 1-1 (Ball 25-6).

Since the days of Franco, the relationship between Real Madrid and Barcelona has only escalated. As the top two teams in Spain, they have been in direct competition for almost every major title over the last 60 years. Although they are very similar in their performance, goals, and ambitions, both clubs are vastly different in tradition and history. Madrid has been known to live by an extremely efficient business standpoint, where revenues and profits are equally as important as wins and trophies. On the other hand, Barcelona has a very unique style and identity, based around nurturing and developing young players into global stars. Although both football clubs enter the season looking to

win every title they compete for, there is no greater glory than victory over the other in El Clásico.

Tensions between the two clubs have only risen in recent years in response to the Catalonians cries for self-governance. Barcelona, synonymous with Catalanian nationalism, “displays a richer luster in confrontations with Real Madrid. Matches become ritual sublimation of war, eleven men in shorts are the sword of the neighborhood, the city, or the nation” (Ball 191). Players transcend the status of just one of many members of a team, instead becoming part of the narrative. For the people of Catalonia, regionalist fervor trumps nationalist sentiment and their unequivocal support of FC Barcelona acts as the quintessential tool for political expression of their Catalan identity. When Franco suppressed all other aspects of their Catalan culture, the Catalan people embraced FC Barcelona as the sole carrier of their Catalan identity. Since then, FC Barcelona has continued to act as a distinctive component of the Catalan identity. For many in Catalonia, supporting FC Barcelona is a matter of immense pride and prestige as they locate their identity inside it.

The independence movement is not driven by a hatred of Spain. Catalans have long been attached to their individual identity and never accepted the loss of national sovereignty after being defeated by the Spanish monarchy in 1714. At the core of Catalonia’s unique identity is the Catalan language, which is distinct from Spanish. Since the re-establishment of Spain’s democracy in 1977 and Catalonia’s autonomy in 1979, Catalan has been revived in the region’s schools. Catalan nationalism is civic and cultural, unlike the ethnic nationalism that has so often plagued Europe (Clotet and

González). FC Barcelona, whose motto is “more than a club,” fits squarely into this conversation as a bastion of Catalan identity.

El Clásico is the physical representation of the Catalan battle for political independence. The two teams embody the modern vanguard of a centuries-old standoff between nationalism and regionalism. In September 2012, a protest march occurred in central Barcelona. The protestors demanded the independence of Catalonia and its consolidation as a sovereign state. After the march, the President of Catalonia, Artur Mas, called for new parliamentary elections to elect a parliament that would exercise the right of self-determination for Catalonia through a referendum (Tremlett). One month later, El Clásico was played.

Prior to the October 2012 match in Camp Nou, Barcelona’s home stadium, FC Barcelona handed out red and gold colored placards to the 98,000 fans in attendance so they could ring the pitch in a giant Catalan national senyera flag. Fans sang Catalonia’s national anthem without any cues from organizers. When the match clock hit 17:14, the stadium exploded with chants of “Independencia! Independencia!” The timing was no coincidence, as it corresponded to the year, 1714, when Catalans lost key rights after its defeat in the last independence war against Spain’s monarchy and the Kingdom of Castile. The two teams played the match out to a 2-2 draw (J. Wilson). In the end, it was just another battle in the century-old war for Catalanian independence, but the winner would have to wait until the next El Clásico.

## Conclusion

There are, it sometimes seems, only two universal games: war and soccer. War is perhaps closer to the realm of fantasy, soccer to that of reality, but both share the same ubiquity and centrality, as though arising from some collective source. Perhaps they are simply variations of the same game, modern industrial-era ritualizations of some common activity. Still today, they often fade into one another. Football managers “declare war,” generals apply soccer tactics and terminology, warlike violence invades the football pitch then spreads into the stands and out into the communities, soldiers wear their team colors into battle, and fan clubs are known as “armies.”

A 1973 article by Richard Sipes distilled the debate into two simple, but contrasting, arguments. One is that combative sports and war are substitutes for aggressive behavior—that the presence of sports is a healthy war for people to discharge their competitive urges. The other is that sports induce a warlike attitude, abetting conflict rather than reducing it (66). The belief that sports can be a source of peace dates back to the start of the modern Olympic movement. The problem is that historically, football has been just as likely to be the trigger for war as the trigger for peace. Football will never bring about peace on its own; in contrast, football cannot start a war by itself. Years of tension already have to be in place in order for a football match to spark any sort of violence. The war fought between Honduras and El Salvador is an example of this phenomenon. Although known as the “Soccer War,” the conflict stemmed from much more than just soccer matches and was primarily just a border dispute. Additionally, the media relied heavily on propaganda that readied the Salvadorans to fight. With regards to Sipes, I believe that football is more of a peacemaker than a peace breaker. It facilitates

the proper communication channels and interactions necessary for preventing or alleviating fighting.

While the French experience discussed suggests how transient the impact of football on racism can be, the efforts of anti-racist groups in European football point to a more secure and lasting advantage. Beginning in the early 1900's in Britain with Kick It Out and Football Against Racism and repeated now in France, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, and Poland, supporter-led initiatives against racism in football have become established agents for change; they have forced national football associations and UEFA to make open racism an unacceptable form of behavior in European football stadiums. Since 2002, UEFA has begun to raise its engagement with the issue, investigating and fining more clubs and associations for more incidents (Goldblatt 769-70). In response to the racist culture in Italy, players have started to take matters into their own hands. After fans began chanting racial epithets at a soccer game in Milan earlier this year, AC Milan midfielder Kevin-Prince Boateng, a black player, responded by kicking the ball into the stands, pulling off his shirt, and walking off the field in Busto Arsizio, followed by his teammates (Khazan). The players of Milan sent a clear message: if racism does not stop, then football will. As UEFA President Michel Platini stated: "[Racism] is not a footballing problem. It's a problem for society but we will try our best to regulate the problem in our football" (McLaughlin).

Football has proven its unique ability to bridge differences and overturn national prejudices. The fact that the World Cup could even take place in South Korea and Japan, as it did in 2002, was a victory for tolerance and understanding. In less than half a century, South Korea had gone from not allowing the Japanese national team to cross its

borders for a World Cup qualifier, to co-hosting the tournament with its former occupier. Furthermore, after three years of civil war in the Ivory Coast, feuding factions talked for the first time in years, and the president called a truce. This was all because the Ivory Coast qualified for the World Cup for the first time (Wilsey). As everyone knows, a country united makes for much better cheerleaders than a country divided. Football's universality is its simplicity—the fact that the game can be played anywhere with anything. Urban children kick a can on concrete and rural kids play with a rag wrapped around another rag, barefoot, and on dirt. Universal yet particular, football is the source of an infinitely renewable supply of hope, occasionally miraculous, and governed by simple, uncontradictory rules (“laws,” officially) that everyone can follow. Football's laws are of equality, nonviolence, and restraint.

Given that the United Nations has an Office on Sport for Development and Peace shows the credence lent to such an idea. The Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace “aims to reach out further to the world of sport and more systematically and coherently encourage the use of sport as a means to promote development and peace” (“United Nations”). Current Special Adviser Wilfried Lemke is proposing an Israel-Palestinian football match and he has supporters ready to provide \$1.5 million dollars to finance the game (“Could?”). The proposal is loftily optimistic but if successful, it would end more than six decades of conflict in the region.

Whenever two nations with a historic, long-standing enmity engage in any professional sport, opportunities and risks are present in terms of furthering or hampering their relationships. Successfully managed, promoted, and administered, professional

sporting contests can be great opportunities for historic enemies to compete with one another and enjoy recreational events together, opening doors to increased and better dialogue, and possibly putting to rest the issues which have colored their relationships in the past. For in the end, football is just a game. Lord Decies, former Vice President of the British Olympic Association, said “It is well to remember that if you play football with a man ... then you won’t want to kill him, no matter what the politicians think about it. We want to foster a real brotherhood of man, and the best way to do it, in my view, is by encouraging the nations to meet each other in games” (qtd. in Goldblatt 227).

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